

# Nevada Department of Agriculture News Release

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**For Immediate Release**  
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## West Nile Virus Bird Information

The Nevada Department of Agriculture/Animal Disease Laboratory (NDOA/ADL) is releasing information for citizens regarding collection of birds suspected of dying from West Nile Virus. The citizens of Nevada can play an important role in the early detection of West Nile Virus in our state. For scientific reasons, it's important that citizens know what to look for, and how to collect a useable dead bird specimen.

NDOA/ADL does not want all dead birds. We are interested in examining dead ravens, crows, jays, blue jays, magpies, hawks, eagles, buzzards and cardinals. According to NDOA/ADL veterinarian Dr. Anette Rink, "It has been documented in thousands of cases that these bird types (two groups and one species) are excellent hosts for West Nile Virus."

If you collect a dead bird, NDOA/ADL will be asking you for your zip code. We will be developing a database on bird collections based on zip codes. Once NDOA/ADL has verified a positive for West Nile Virus in a zip code area, we will not accept any more dead birds from that zip code. West Nile Virus is now considered an indigenous disease in the United States and this type of collection will be standard for developing a baseline over the next several years.

The quality of the dead bird sample is critical for diagnostic purposes. NDOA/ADL requests that citizens follow this protocol if you find a dead bird:

If the eyes of the dead bird are sunken or completely gone, the bird is too old. We cannot accept birds that have been dead for about a day or more.

Grab the dead bird's wing and move it. If the wing moves independently from the body it's been dead a short time. If the bird's body moves with the wing, rigor mortis has set in and the specimen is too old.

The safest way to pick up a dead bird is to put your hand in a plastic bag. Use the bag like a glove and pick up the dead bird. Using your free hand, turn the bag inside out over the bird, twist the bag's top and seal it.

The Nevada Department of Agriculture/Animal Disease Laboratory will not pick up dead birds from citizens. Dead birds must be brought to NDOA/ADL offices. If a citizen picks up a "good" dead bird specimen and it's nighttime, or the weekend, refrigerate (don't freeze) the specimen and bring it to the NDOA/ADL offices as soon as possible.